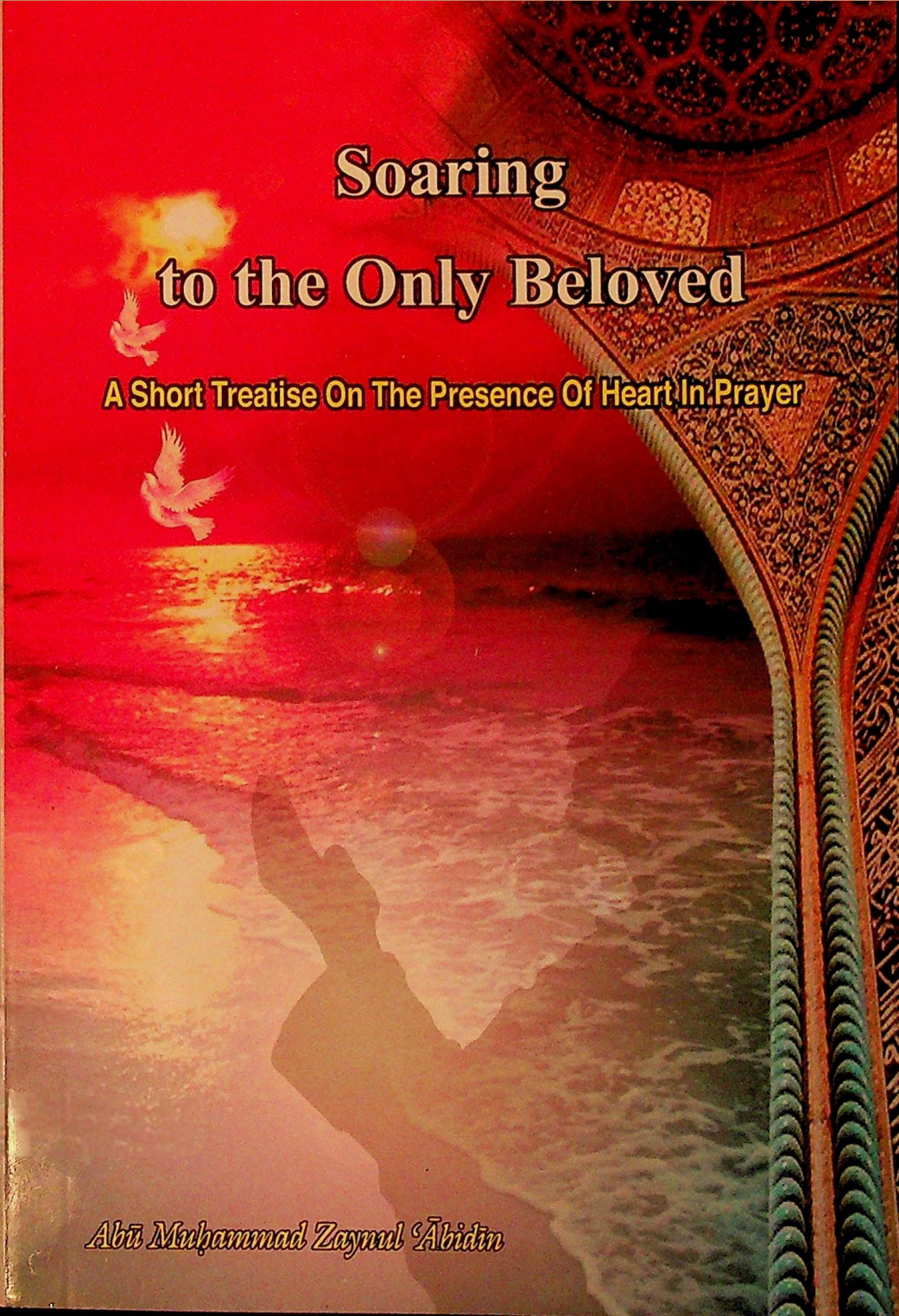
Soaring
to the Only Beloved
A Short Treatise On The Presence Of Heart In Prayer
Abū Muḥammad Zaynul ʿĀbidīn

Almighty Allah prescribed a set of devotional acts for man to enable him to soar to His Proximity and attain knowledge of His Exalted Presence. It is this sacred aspiration wherein lies the true happiness of the human being. To understand this reality does not require one to search for intellectual proofs. The innate nature (*fitra*) of the human being itself is a proof of this reality: the human being innately aspires to attain infinite perfection, which exists in none other than his Creator. If his innate nature has not been eclipsed by his misdeeds, the desire to attain perfection never ceases, and the wayfarer continues on his journey towards his Beloved. Almighty Allah molded the human being in a manner that he yearns and is able to soar forever and achieve the higher levels of perfection. He naturally does not aspire for limited perfection. His aim is the Infinite. And the reality of the Infinite is none other than Allah.

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# Soaring to the Only Beloved

A short treatise on the presence of heart in prayer

*Abū Muḥammad Zaynul ʿĀbidīn*

**In the Name of Allah (the Absolute Perfect Being), the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful**

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الصلاة معراج الى الله

# Soaring to the Only Beloved

## A short treatise on the presence of heart in prayer

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# Humble Presentation

*O Allāh, I humbly present this short treatise to our beloved guide, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)- Imām al-ʿĀrifin (the doyen of the saints), whose total attention to the Only Beloved in prayers was not deterred even by the removal of an arrow that had pierced his blessed foot.*

Qum al-Muqaddasah

In the close Neighborhood of the ever resplendent lady, Fāṭima, named by her brother- Imam Ali al-Riḍā (ʿa), as al-Ma'ṣūma (the infallible one)- may Allah imbue our hearts with intense love for her, and may He emancipate us by her intercession-*Āmīn*

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# Preface

# Preface

*In the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful*

The Holy Qur'ān says[1]:

يا أيُّها الإنسان إنّكَ كادحٌ إلى ربِّكَ كدحاً فَمُلاقِيهِ

O Human being,
Surely you are striving
Towards your Lord
Laboriously,
And you shall meet Him

Addressed to the Human being.
The Human Being is struggling on a path
The path leads to His Lord
The struggle is laborious
He would meet His Lord

Rūmī in his celebrated masterpiece- Mathnawi metaphorically and in a beautiful style begins by narrating the speech of the human soul who is at pain and yearns to return back to his dwelling of peace:

HEARKEN to the reed-flute[2] , how it complains,
Lamenting its banishment from its home:
"Ever since they tore me from my osier bed,
My plaintive notes have moved men and women to tears.
I burst my breast, striving to give vent to sighs,
And to express the pangs of my yearning for my home.
He who abides far away from his home
Is ever longing for the day he shall return.

---

[1] Holy Qur'ān, 84:6

[2] Reed Flute is a metaphor for the Human soul- See commentary of Mathnawi by Ḥāj Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī- the great Shi'ite mystic-philosopher, vol.1, p.17

The abode of the human being and his true home is somewhere else. He is a stranger in this world in the true sense of the word and His place is the proximity and nearness of the only Beloved. So long as he resides in the straits of this realm, the pain of separation has always to remain. It is by the wings of knowledge and action that the bird of his spirit can leave the cage of material attachment and fly to the realm of the Beloved. But he needs to know the way and style to soar to the abode of peace to which the Beloved himself invites him[3]:

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And Allāh *continually* Invites
To the abode of peace
And *continually* Guides whosoever
He wants
To the straight path

As long as he has not deciphered the true path, which the Holy Qur'ān calls *"ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm"* (the straight path), he should never dream to migrate to his hometown. The Beloved, who yearned that his lovers return to His neighborhood where their homes lay, sent His messengers so that they may guide the birds of perplexity to their destination.

Among the fundamental methods that these guides of the human being taught was prayer. *Ṣalāt* – a Divinely inspired mode of prayer taught by the Holy Prophet (ṣ)- is a method and an opportunity to fly and soar to one's destination. If the human being utilizes this opportunity that comes 5 times a day, his journey would undoubtedly commence. Why should he allow several opportunities during his life time to go waste? Doesn't he yearn deep in his heart for the company of the Beloved? Doesn't he realize that it is high time he should go back home and enjoy the

[3] Holy Qur'ān, 10:25

neighborhood of the only Beloved who intensely loves his company?

Those who have tried to seek help by this vehicle of spiritual ascent may complain about its ineffectiveness, since it has not yet made them reach their destination. To them must be said that *'No imaginary vehicle can transport you to your destination.'* If the human being prays observing the outer as well as inner etiquette of prayer he surely will attain success in comprehending his much longed abode. It is the negligence of the heart in prayer that makes the prayer devoid of its spirit and destroys the opportunity of the human being. As we shall see in this small treatise, the presence of heart (*ḥuḍūru'l qalb*) is one of the most fundamental conditions of prayer, without which the prayer lays a negative or no effect on the supplicant. Appreciating its importance, one should try to observe the same and always struggle in this noble venture. Obviously the task is challenging and difficult in the beginning, but with continual struggle and steadfastness in bridling the faculty of imagination of the human being and detaching the human soul from temporal inclinations, one can slowly and gradually attain the state of complete absorption in prayer.

This concise treatise is a humble attempt aimed at making us realize the necessity, possibility, and methodology of attaining this vital spirit of prayer. May Almighty Allāh enable us achieve the same, so that we can join the flocks who are busy soaring to the realm of their Beloved and are very anxious to meet Him. If we show laxity in this sublime aspiration, 'the state of perpetual regret' in the Hereafter would be of no use to us.

All praises solely belong to Allāh-the Absolute Perfect Being,
The Lord of the World Of Dependent Existence.

*Utterly destitute to Almighty Allāh,*
*Abū Muḥammad Zaynu' l 'Ābidīn*
*Holy Proximity of Bībī Ma'ṣūma ('a)- Qum-al-Muqaddasa*

# Introduction

## Introduction

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ حَنِيْفاً
وَّ مَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْن

Surely I have turned my face to Him
Who originated the heavens and the earth, being upright;
and I am not of the polytheists.[4]

Attention is the concomitant of conversation. Every sound human being enjoys attention when transmitting his thoughts to his addressee. Such attention neither requires laborious thought processes nor any kind of exertion for the control of the movement of the mind. When one wishes to convey something, the mind translates it to its respective words and the tongue reveals the same. One, however, would need to bridle his tongue to avoid uttering all what is forbidden or futile.

Most of the speech in prayer is from a Divine source, and hence bridling does not make any sense. Instead, the *muṣallī* is required to ensure that his attention is continuously focused on the act of worship or the Worshipped One, and that the words of his prayer originate from the depths of his heart and the heights of his mind. This is where many are overcome by the bird of imagination, which has habituated itself to fly from one branch of the tree of material attachments to another. Consequently, the worshipper gets deprived of the progress and spiritual development he could acquire through this most effective means of attaining God's proximity.

It is difficult for one to immediately achieve and maintain this praiseworthy and necessary state of attention in prayer. One has to cross certain levels of attention before enjoying a natural conversation with the Beloved.

---

[4] Holy Qur'ān, 6:79

In the present treatise we shall briefly try to discuss the following vital issues concerning attention in prayer:

## Sections Covered

1. The necessity of attention in prayer
2.The possibility of attention in prayer
3. Levels of attention in prayer
4. Hurdles on the way to attention in prayer and their removal.
5. Suggested methods of achieving attention in prayer.
6. The effect of maintaining one's attention in prayer.

# Section 1

## The Necessity of Attention In Prayer

How can the attention of the heart and the expression of humility not be the spirit of the prayer and (how can) the perfection of prayer not depend upon them, while the *musalli* in his prayer and supplication whispers to his Lord?

-Mawla Narraqi

## Section 1:
## The Necessity Of Concentration In Prayer

The Holy Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوا لاَ تَقْرَبُو الصَّلاَةَ وَ أَنْتُمْ سُكَارى حَتّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُوْنَ

O you who believe
Do not near prayers in the state of intoxication
until you know what you say[5]

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said:

أَيُّهَا النَّاس إِنَّ الْمُصَلِّي إِذَا صَلَّى فَإِنَّهُ يُنَاجِي رَبَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالى
فَلْيَعْلَمْ بِما يُنَاجِيهِ

O mankind
Surely when the worshipper (*muṣallī*) prays,
He whispers[6] unto his Blessed and Almighty Lord
Therefore he must know that with which he whispers.[7]

*Rational Evidence*

Prayer is a kind of worship taught to the human being by his Lord through Revelation to enable him attain His proximity. It consists of a set of actions and expressions, most of which clearly declare the immaculate nature of God.

---

[5] Holy Qur'ān 4:43

[6] There is subtle point implied in this holy narration. The *muṣallī* 'whispers' and not merely engages in any kind of communication with His *Rabb* (Lover, Creator, Possessor, Sustainer and Trainer). The act of 'whispering' refers to a special kind of conversation, where the secretive feelings of the heart are expressed near the beloved, and a sense of amity is experienced. Who is this Omnipotent Beloved to Whom every element is dependent at every moment of its existence, and Who knows all the misdeeds of His sinful slave, yet He permits him to whisper to Him several times a day?

[7] Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ḥanbal, *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*, v.2, p.483, tr. 6135, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 2nd ed.

*A set of expressions*, therefore, form an important part of the daily prayer. And clearly, the act of expression cannot really be known to be so if the heart is oblivious of what the tongue utters. Therefore, attention is a necessary concomitant of expression, and hence is also necessary in prayer.

Mawlā al-Narāqī in his ethical opus- *Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt* says:

و كيف لا يكون حضور القلب و الخشوع رُوح الصلاة و لا يتوقف كمال الصلاة عليه، مع انّ المصلّي في صلاته و دعائه مناجٍ ربّه؟ و لا شكّ انّ الكلام مع الغفلة ليس بمناجاة، و أيضاً الكلام إعرابٌ عمّا في الضمير، و لا يتأتي الإعراب عمّا في الضمير إلاّ بحضور القلب، فأيّ سؤال في قوله: (اهدنا الصّراط المستقيم) إذا كان القلب غافلاً؟ ولا شكّ أيضاً انّ المقصود من القراءة و الأذكار الثناء و الحمد و التضرع و الدعاء، و المخاطب هو الله- تعالي-، فإذا كان قلب العبد محجوباً عنه بحجاب الغفلة، و لا يراه و لا يشاهده، بل كان غافلاً عن المخاطب، و يحرك لسانه بحكم العادة، فما أبعد هذا عن المقصود بالصلاة التي شُرّعت لتصقيل القلب و تجديد ذكر الله...

How can the presence of the heart and the expression of humility not be the spirit of the prayer and (how can) the perfection of prayer not depend upon them, while the worshipper (*muṣallī*) in his prayer and supplication whispers to his Lord? There is no doubt that speech along with absent-mindedness is not the act of whispering. In addition, speech is an expression of what is in the heart or mind, and this is impossible save by means of the attention of the heart; for what (really) does the supplicant ask when he says: 'Guide us on the straight path' while the heart is inattentive? And there is no doubt also that the purpose behind Qur'ān-recitation and invocations (*adhkār*) is the act of laudation, praise, the expression of one's humility and supplication while the addressee is the Almighty Allāh. If the heart of the servant, therefore, was veiled from Him by the curtain of inattentiveness, and did not see or witness Him, but rather was inattentive of the addressee, and he moved his tongue out of (mere) habit, how remote then, is this, from the purpose behind prayer-which was legislated for the refinement of the heart and renewal of one's remembrance of God...[8]

[8] Mawlā Muḥammad Mahdī Narāqī, *Jāmi' al-Sa'ādāt*, vol.3, p. 325.

*Qur'anic Evidence*

In addition, the following verse implies that the reason behind the prohibition of prayer in the state of intoxication is the worshipper's ignorance of what he utters:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ آمَنُوْا لا تَقْرَبُو الصَّلاَةَ وَ أَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتّى تَعْلَمُوْا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ

O you who believe,
Do not near prayers in the state of intoxication
Until you know what you say[9]

Hence were he to pray in that state, he would utter statements the meaning of which he is oblivious of.

*An Etymological Discussion*

Were we to reflect carefully on this verse, we would come to realize its universality: the word سُكَارَى (*sukārā*) is the plural of سُكْران (*sukrān*) and the word سكر etymologically means:

...هو الحيلولة في جريان طبيعي بحيث يتحصّل جريان خلاف ما كان....و منها السكر الحاصل في جريان التعقل التفكّر...

"...Interruption in a natural process, such that a course contrary to it follows...and of its extensions is intoxication [سُكْر (*sukr*)] that comes about in the (natural) process of thinking and intellection..."[10]

The late mystic-scholar Sulṭān 'Alī, in his Qur'ān commentary *Bayān al-Sa'āda Fī Maqāmāt al-'Ibāda* says:

و السُّكْر مِنَ السَّكْر بمعني السدّ و يسمّي الحالة الحاصلة من استعمال شيء من المسكرات سكراً لسدها طرق تصرّف العقل في القوي و طرق انقياد القوي للعقل، و لا اختصاصَ لها بالخمر العِنبية المعروفة بل كل ما يحصل منه تلك الحالة شُرْباً أو أكلاً أو تدخيناً أو غيرذلك فهو خمر النفس سواءٌ حصل منه السُّكر المعروف كالفقّاع و العصيرات المُتخذة من غير العنب و كالبنج و الجرس و الأفيون أو لا كالحرص و

[9] Holy Qur'ān, 4:43.
[10] Muṣṭafawī, *al-Taḥqīq*, vol.5, pp.160-161

الأمل و الحبّ و الشّهوة و الغضب و الحسد و البُخل و الغمّ و الفرَح و النُّعاس و الكسل الغالبة بحيث يغلب مقتضاها علي مقتضي العقل بل الحالة الحاصلة المانعة من نفاذ حكم العقل و تدبيره سكر النفس من أيّ شيء كانت و من أيّ سبب حصلت

The word *'sukr'* stems from the word *'sakr'* meaning 'encumbrance'; and the state gotten by taking an intoxicant is known as *'sukr'* because it encumbers and closes the channels of the intellect's influence on the other faculties of the human being and [hinders] the paths of their subordination to it. And intoxicants do not specifically relate to the well-known brandy [for example]; rather, all those things through which the state of intoxication is attained, whether by means of drinking, eating, smoking or other than that, are called the intoxicants of the *nafs*, no matter whether the common intoxication that comes about through the intake of bear and extracts gotten from other than grapes and the usage of narcotics and opium, is attained thereby or not; An example of the latter is when intoxication comes about through overwhelming greed, hope, love, desire, anger, jealousy, stinginess, sorrow, happiness, slumber or laziness, such that the requisites of these characteristics overpower the dictate of the intellect; rather (any) state gotten that hampers the execution of the intellect's command and control is *sukrun nafs*, regardless of its entity and cause...[11]

'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī in his Qur'an commentary presents the following explanation for the verse under discussion:

(لا تَقْرَبُو الصَّلاَةَ) أي لا تقربو مقام الحضور و المناجاة مع الله في حال كونكم (سُكَارى) من نوم الغفلة أو من خمور الهوى و محبة الدنيا (حتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ) في مناجاتكم و لا تشتغل قلوبكم بأشغل الدنيا و وساوسها...

**(Do not near prayers)**: Do not near the station of presence and secret conversation with Allah when you are **(intoxicated)** by the sleep of negligence or the intoxicants of mundane desire and love of the world, **(until you know what you are saying)** in your whisperings and do not occupy your hearts with the occupations of the world and its insinuations....[12]

Having known the roots of سُكْر (*sukr*) we come to realize that the commonly understood intoxication is just one of its examples

---

[11] Mullā Sulṭān 'Alī, *Bayān al-Sa'ādah*, v.2, pp. 21-22.
[12] Ibn 'Arabī ,*Tafsīr Ibn 'Arabī*, vol.1, p.143

which the masses seem to be most familiar with. Other extensions (*maṣādiq*) can also be comprehended. Commentators of the Holy Qur'ān mention a tradition of Imam al-Ṣādiq ('a) that implicitly endorses this contention. He ('a) says about verse (4:43) that, 'of the examples of *sukr* is سُكْرُ النَّوْمِ 'the sukr of sleep'. "This statement," says the Mawlā Kāshānī in his '*al-Ṣāfi*', "manifests universality."[13] He means that '*sukr*' (that interruption that comes about in the natural process of thinking and intellection) has various extensions. In a tradition from Al-Kāfi, Imām al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have said:

لاَ تقمْ إِلَي الصَّلاَةِ مُتَكَاسِلاً وَ لاَ مُتَنَاعِساً وَ لاَ مُتَثَاقِلاً فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ خِلاَلِ النِّفَاقِ وَ قَدْ نَهَي اللّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ أَنْ تَقُوْمُوا إِلَي الصَّلاَةِ وَ أَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى، قَالَ سُكْرُ النَّوْمِ.

'Neither stand for prayer in the state of restlessness, or slumber; nor while you are over satiated; for verily (all) those are of the characteristics of hypocrisy; and indeed Allah has forbidden you to stand in prayer while you are intoxicated; and by intoxication He means 'the intoxication of sleep'

Furthermore, the reason for the prohibition of prayer in the state of intoxication, as indicated in the verse under discussion, clearly reveals the necessity of attention of what one expresses in prayer.

Other verses of the Holy Qur'ān also reveal, although implicitly, the necessity of attention in prayer. For example, verse 14 of chapter Ṭāhā clearly tells us that prayer is a means of remembering Allāh:

أَقِمِ الصَّلاَةَ لِذِكْرِي

Keep up prayer
For remembering Me.[14]

---

[13] Mawlā Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Tafsir al-Ṣāfi*, v.1, p. 453
[14] Holy Qur'ān, 20:14

Can remembrance ever be possible when there is no attention and concentration in prayer? Obviously not.

*Evidence From The Traditions*

The following traditions too prove the necessity of the presence of heart in prayer:

1. The Ahlulbayt ('a) are reported to have said:

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنْ صَلاَتِكَ إِلاَّ مَا أَحْضَرْتَ فِيْهِ قَلْبَكَ

You have no share from your prayer
Save that portion in which you maintained the attention of your heart.[15]

2. The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said:

لاَ يَقْبَلُ اللهُ صَلاَةَ عَبْدٍ لاَ يَحْضَرُ قَلْبُهُ مَعَ بَدَنِهِ

Allah does not accept the prayer of that servant of his
Whose heart is not present along with his body.[16]

3. Imām al-Bāqir ('a) is reported to have said:

إِذَا قُمْتَ فِي الصَّلاَةِ فَعَلَيْكَ بِالإِقْبَالِ عَلي صَلاَتِكَ فَإِنَّمَا يُحْسَبُ لَكَ مِنْهَا مَا أَقْبَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ

When you stand up in prayer,
You should pay attention towards it,
For verily only that portion of it shall be taken into account
In which you paid attention.[17]

---

[15] Ibn Fahd Ḥillī, *'Uddat al-Dā'ī*, p.168
[16] Abū Ja'far al-Barqī, *al-Maḥāsin*, v.1, p. 406.
[17] Thiqat al-Islām al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, v.3, p.299

*What The Muslim Jurists Hold*

According to Muslim jurists (*fuqahā*), however, the presence of heart is not obligatory in prayer. For not all men can achieve and maintain attention throughout their prayer. It would also require time before one has complete control over his imaginations in prayer. Hence, according to the Islamic jurisprudence the state of continual concentration is not a condition the absence of which invalidates prayer. Nevertheless it is considered as highly recommended, such that some jurists allow the prayer to be delayed within the framework of the prayer time for the sake of achieving the state of the heart's attention (*iqbāl*).

Therefore although the prayer of one who does not observe attention is correct and sufficient in absolving him from his obligation, it would not transport him spiritually. The overt actions of prayer would only relieve him from disobedience. For him, however, to soar to the Divine and undergo a transformation would require attention and concentration.

# Section 2

## The Possibility Of Attention In Prayer

...This [trend] made many scholars conjecture that maintaining the bird of imagination and rendering it obedient are among those matters that are beyond the realm of possibility and adjacent to natural impossibilities. However, this is not the case, for it is possible to make it obedient by means of spiritual mortification and training and spending time, to the extent that the bird of imagination is in his hold and does not move except by his will and choice...

-Imam Ruhullah Khumayni

## Section 2:
## The Possibility of Concentration In Prayer.

Almighty Allāh says in the Holy Qur'ān:

لا يُكَلِّفُ اللّهُ نَفْسًا إلاّ وُسْعَهَا

Allāh does not charge a soul
Save to its capacity.[18]

The stereotype that concentration in prayer is impossible is one of the greatest hurdles that hamper man from wayfaring towards the Divine proximity and attaining his perfection. It is indeed, according to some, a Satanic ruse inculcated to hinder man from attaining his felicity and happiness in both the worlds.

The human being, therefore, should be extremely cautious before accepting any unestablished notion without convincing proof and evidence. He should never be deceived with statistical data and inductive reasoning to conclude that *ḥuḍūru'l qalb* (the presence of heart) is impossible or next to impossible.

Akin to physical training that requires continuous exercise and practice, mind control too can be achieved with time and struggle. Man should realize that his faculty of imagination is habituated to flit to different places all the time. Therefore he should strive to curb this habit and bridle it so that it is directed by his will.

The late Imām Khumaynī says:

و من القوي التي تقبل التربية قوّة الخيال و قوّة الواهمة فإنهما قبل التربية كطائر فرّار و متحرك بلا نهاية يطير من غصن إلي غصن و يتحرّك من شيء إلي شيء آخر بحيث أنّ الإنسان إذا حاسبها دقيقة واحدة يري أنّها انتقلت مسلسلة إلي أشياء بمناسبات ضعيفة جداً و ارتباطا غير متناسبة حتّي ظَنَّ كثيرٌ من العلماء أنّ حفظ طائر الخيال و جعله طاءعاً من الأمور الخارجة عن حيِّز الإمكان و ملحقٌ با لمحالات العادية، و لكنّ الأمر ليس كذلك و يمكن تطويعه با لرياضة و التربية و صرف الوقت بحيث يكون طائر

[18] Holy Qur'ān, 2:286

الخيال في قبضته لا يتحرك إلاّ بإرادته و إختياره فيحبسه متى أراد في أيّ مقصدٍ أو أيّ مطلب بحيث يكون محبوساً في ذلك المقصد ساعات.

And of the faculties that accept orientation and training are the faculties of imagination (*khayāl*) and estimate (*wahm*), for surely, before orientation, they resemble a bird that frequently escapes and perpetually moves; it flies from one branch to another and moves from one thing to another, such that, if the human being was to evaluate the movements it has made in one minute's time, he would find that it has moved continuously to (different) things on extremely trivial instances and irrelevant occasions. This [trend] made many scholars conjecture that maintaining the bird of imagination and rendering it obedient are among those matters that are beyond the realm of possibility and adjacent to natural impossibilities. However, this is not the case, for it is possible to make it obedient by means of spiritual mortification and training and spending time, to the extent that the bird of imagination is in his hold and does not move except by his will and choice, and (thus) he suppresses it whenever he wants to, wherever he wishes to, and in whatever instance he chooses to do so- such that it is held in the location (said instance) for hours.[19]

Therefore judging the statistical data acquired from a group of the masses should not quickly lead one to make conclusions of its impossibility. Only unwavering evidence should be sought to find out the truth. Such evidence may be gotten from the Holy Qur'ān, the Sunna, or impartial rational judgments.

*Evidence From the Qur'an And the Holy Narrations*

The verse that calls the believer to keep up prayer for the purpose of Allah's remembrance (20:14)[20] as well as the traditions mentioned in the previous section also clearly prove the possibility of concentration in prayer: how can the Wise Creator command man to keep up prayer to remember Him when the latter cannot concentrate therein?

The traditions also informed us that the degree of acceptance of the daily prayer depended on the extent of one's attention therein.

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[19] Imām Rūhullāh al-Khumaynī, *al-Ādāb al-Ma'nawiyyah Lissalāt*, pp. 95-96

[20] '*Keep up prayer for remembering Me.*'

Can such directions of guidance be taught to the believer if they are impossible to achieve? Obviously Allāh does not burden any soul save what it can bear to handle. The Holy Qur'ān says:

لا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا

Allāh does not charge a soul save to its capacity.[21]

Hence one cannot deny the possibility of attaining concentration in prayer. The task being difficult cannot be taken as a reason of its impossibility. If man struggles and is orderly in his venture, he would achieve his objective. The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَ أَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلاَّ مَا سَعَى

And that a man shall have to his account only as he has labored.[22]

In short:

1. Allāh does not enjoin that which the human being cannot bear
2. Allāh has enjoined us to pray for His Remembrance

* Therefore, His Remembrance is a possible phenomenon

3. And Remembrance without attention is no Remembrance

* Therefore attention in prayer is a possible phenomenon.

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[21] Holy Qur'ān, 2:286
[22] Ibid., 53:39

# Section 3

## Levels Of Attention In Prayer

...the level of the heart's conviction is extremely different from intellectual comprehension. There are many things man has grasped intellectually, but has not attained the heart's conviction, and his heart does not confirm what his intellect says...

-Imam Ruhullah Khumayni

## Section 3:
## Levels Of Attention In Prayer

The Holy Qur'ān says:

وَ أَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلاَّ مَا سَعَى

And that a man shall have to his account only as he has labored.[23]

وَ لِكُلٍّ دَرَجَاتٌ مِمَّا عَمِلُوْا

All have degrees
According to what they have done.[24]

In order to determine the steps one must pursue to achieve attention in prayer, we must try to define the kind of attention we aspire. According to scholars of ethics and gnosis attention is of different levels and degrees. Clearly, not all who aspire to realize attention in prayer immediately possess the ability to ascend to the most recommended of all the levels of attention.

To define all the levels of attention is beyond the scope of this limited treatise. We shall only briefly look at some of the recommended levels of attention in prayer, so that we may know where we stand and what our target should be. Discussing the higher levels would require an introduction, which is beyond the scope of this treatise. Those interested, however, in having information beyond what is covered over here, may refer to the advanced texts available on this subject.

Attention in prayer is sometimes divided into two kinds:

1. Attention to the act of worship.
2. Attention to the Worshipped One.

'Attention to the act of worship' in turn is of various levels, some of which can be attained with practice by a majority of people,

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[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*, 6:132

**whereas** others can only be realized by those who have thoroughly purified themselves from the taints of sins and attained the proximity of Almighty Allāh.

'Attention to the Creator', however, can be experienced by only those who enjoy the higher levels of the previous kind of attention. This should, however, not make us believe that we cannot attain such levels. Rather, they are attainable, but need continual spiritual struggle and steadfastness.

The late Imām al-Khumaynī in his *Sirr al-Ṣalāt* (the Kernel of Prayer) enumerates the levels of 'attention to the act of worship' as follows[25] :

1. ATTENTION TO WORSHIP IN GENERAL: In this rudimentary level, which is attainable for all [the believers], the worshipper must inculcate in his heart that worship is the act of praising the Creator. And from the beginning of the act of worship up to its end he should make the heart understand that he is extolling the Creator, even though he does not understand the meaning of what he expresses.

2. ATTENTION TO WORSHIP IN DETAIL: In this level the worshipper's heart is present at every moment of the worship he is engaged in. Besides, he also knows how he praises and whispers to his Lord. This level itself is subdivided into several different levels depending on the stations of the hearts of the worshippers and their gnosis.

*Levels Of Detailed Attention*

1. LEVEL 1: A group of people do not comprehend save the outer and overt facet of prayer. However, they do understand the general import of the recitations, laudations, and invocations they pronounce in prayer. The presence of their heart, however, is limited to inculcating the meaning of whatever they recite in prayer. It is highly important for this group not to limit the meaning of what they recite in what *they understand* there-from; [in other words,] they should not think that there isn't any (other) meaning of what they recite save that which they apparently comprehend. 'For,' says, Imam al-Khumaynī, *'this belief besides being contrary to the intellect and tradition, is very detrimental to the human being too.'* And one of the great masterpiece ruses of Satan is to occupy and please man with what he (already) possesses,

[25] Imām al-Khumaynī, *Sirr al-Ṣalāt*, pp. 17-20

and make him cynical towards the rest of the unknown realities and sciences, thereby deriving astonishing results.

2. LEVEL 2: Another group consists of those who intellectually understand the realities of the acts of prayer. For example they understand by intellectual proof how all praises [solely] return to God; or they know the reality of *Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm* and the meaning of *Surat al-Tawḥīd* that represents the fundamental facets of the ideological realities. All this is known, however, through rational proofs and the intellect. The *ḥuḍūru 'l qalb* of this group in prayer is such that their hearts are attentive and comprehend in detail the realities and the laudations they recite, and understand what they express and how they praise their Lord.

3. LEVEL 3: Another group, after having comprehended the realities of the acts of worship through their intellect, inculcate the same into their hearts, and attain belief and conviction in the same. This is because the level of the heart's conviction is extremely different from intellectual comprehension. There are many things that man may have grasped intellectually, but not yet have attained the heart's conviction; hence, his heart does not confirm what his intellect says.

Having briefly observed the levels of the presence of heart in prayer, we may now look at how one can achieve some of these levels. But first, in order to treat the continual process of flitting that our minds always experience during prayer, it would be better to diagnose and search for the root cause of the malady, so that we are able to decipher its remedy and the correct method of its treatment.

# Section 4

## Hurdles on the Way To Attention in Prayer And their Removal

The to-and-fro movement that we undertake to drive off the distractions of our minds all our life will never make us progress. It rather manifests stagnation and stillness. On the contrary, if we were to uproot the causes of distraction, we would easily be able to soar towards the proximity of Allah.

# Section 4:
# Hurdles on the Way to Attention In Prayer and their Removal

## CAUSES OF DISTRACTION

Scholars of ethics and gnosis mention in their books two fundamental categories of elements that can distract one's attention in prayer:

- The External Elements
- The Internal Elements

*The External Elements*

These are external elements that divert the attention of the worshipper (*muṣalli*). They mainly concern his sight and hearing perceptions. Places where a conversation is going on, or the television happens to be switched on, for example, would quickly distract the attention of one who is easily vulnerable to such stimuli. Praying on a beautifully decorated velvet prayer mat or an open place where people tend to pass by can also serve as a source of diversion of attention for some. For this very reason some scholars of ethics advise people whose attention is easily diverted by auditories and visibilities to seek seclusion in a dark place when praying. In his commentary to al-Kāfi, Ṣadru'l Muta'allihīn informs us of what the wayfarers to Allah's proximity practiced after having sought forgiveness from Allah. One of these, he says, is *al-khalwa* (seclusion), *which of course does not imply, as some may tend to surmise, the total abandonment of the society for the sake of worship*. He says:

و فائدتها دفع الشواغل و ضبط السمع و البصر، فإنهما دهليزا القلب يدخل منهما إليه من الشواغل و المفاسد و الوساوس ما يزعجه و يغيّره عمّا هو عليه من قصده، فلا بدّ من ضبطها، و ليس يمكن ذلك إلاّ بالخلوة في مكان مظلم...

The benefit of seclusion is that it frees oneself from preoccupations and enables one to control his hearing and sight. For verily these two are the vestibules of the heart; it is through them that things like distractions, evil thoughts and Satanic insinuations that disturb the human being and divert him from his intention, enter the heart. Hence they must be bridled; and that cannot be realized save by means of seclusion in a dark place...[26]

Seclusion is recommended in supererogatory prayers. Otherwise, congregational prayer has ample benefits and one should strive to always attend the congregation so that he may be spiritually uplifted.

*The Internal Elements*

The internal elements act as the closest and most dangerous of the above two categories to the *muṣallī*. Resembling a magnetic force, they attract innumerable kinds of imaginations related to them. So long as they subsist, ***man should never dream of attaining even some of the rudimentary kinds of concentration in prayer***, let alone attaining the higher levels. It is useless to suppose that continual forceful repulsion of stray thoughts can easily enable one to achieve the state of concentration he aspires. In his expurgation (*tahdhīb*) of the voluminous ethical work of *Iḥyā'*, Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshāni quotes a beautiful example Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzāli mentions to illustrate the reality of the matter . He says:

و مثاله: رجل تحت شجرة أراد أن يصفو له فكره و كانت أصوات العصافير تشوش عليه، فلم يزل يطيرها بخشبة في يده و يعود إلي فكره فتعود العصافير فيعود إلي التنفير بالخشبة، فقيل له إنّ هذا سير السواني و لا ينقطع فإن أردت الخلاص فاقطع الشجرة. فكذلك شجرة الشهوات إذا تشعّبت و تفرعّت أغصانُها انْجذبت إليها الأفكار انجذابَ العصافير إلي الأشجار و انجذاب الذباب إلي الأقذار و الشغل يطول في دفعها فإنّ الذّباب كلّما ذبّ آب و لأجله سُمّي ذباباً. فكذلك الخواطر و هذه الشهوات كثيرة و قلّما يخلو العبد عنها. و يجمعها أصلٌ واحد و هو حبُّ الدنيا و ذلك رأس كلّ خطيئة..

[26] Ṣadru'l Muta'allihīn al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥu Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, v.1, p. 449.

Its example is that of a man under a tree who wanted his thoughts to be clear [from distractions], while the noise of the sparrows on the tree [above] disturbed him. Whenever he chased them off by a stick in his hand to resume his state of contemplation, he found them return again. The following, thus, was said to him: 'Surely this kind of movement is like that of *sawānī* (the camel that is used to draw water from the well and carry the same (سير السواني )); and [such circular movement] shall not change[27]. Therefore if you would like to free yourself [from this state of continual distraction] chop off the tree altogether. Likewise is the tree of material desires: when it's branches multiply it attracts various thoughts the way the sparrows were attracted to the branches of the tree and the way a fly is attracted to dirt; it would take a long time to chase it off, for indeed whenever the fly is chased away it returns back [*kullamā dhabba ūba*]. That is why it was called *dhubāb* [that which returns whenever it is chased]. Similar is the case with imaginations. And these material passions are numerous and hardly does the supplicant lack in having them. *And one origin unites them: love for the world, which is the root cause of every misdeed*[28] .

Hence the solution to eliminate the magnetic force within, is to demagnetize it through the process of continual struggle against one's vain inclinations and the process of detachment (*zuhd*) from the pleasures of the material world. This should not be mistaken for 'abstinence', since Islam does not teach us to abandon the 'material means' that Almighty Allāh has provided us with. The real meaning of *zuhd* is 'detachment' (*qaṭ'ul 'alā'iq*) and not 'abandonment of the material means' as conjectured by some.

Only when the human being understands that the material needs of the world are 'the means' and not 'the goal', and practices accordingly can the process of demagnetization transpire.

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[27] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī here likens the situation with the 'sayr al-sawānī'- the movement of the camel that is normally used to draw water from the well. The circular movement it undertakes is an allusion to 'stagnation' and 'no progress'. The to-and-fro movement that we undertake to drive off the distractions of our minds all our life will never make us progress. It rather manifests stagnation and stillness. On the contrary, if we were to uproot the causes of distraction, we would easily be able to soar towards the proximity of Allāh.

[28] Mawlā Fayḍ Kāshānī, al-Maḥajjatu'l Bayḍā', v.1, p.376

# Section 5

## Suggested Methods Of Achieving Attention In Prayer

Imam 'Ali ('a) is reported to have said: "Beware that every deed of yours is performed according to your prayer."This means that there is a real link between our prayers and the deeds we perform. This tradition informs us that the deeds of the human being are shaped according to his prayer. If the prayer infuses the spirit of monotheism in the heart and mind of the worshipper (*musalli*) and orients him accordingly, the deeds that would follow would sparkle with the light of monotheism and the human being would undergo spiritual progress.

# Section 5: Suggested Methods Of Achieving Attention In Prayer

*Realization Of The Importance Of Prayers:*

Praying in the state of indifference and laxity should not be considered as an astonishing phenomenon in the life of one who has not realized the importance of prayer and its vital role in a believer's life. This contention needs no intellectual evidence, as it is crystal clear to every impartial observer.

The emphasis Islām lays on prayer is enough to drive one to appreciate its fundamental role in a person's life and character. Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

وَ اعْلَمْ أَنَّ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ مِنْ عَمَلِكَ تَبَعٌ لِصَلاتِك

"Beware that every deed of yours is performed According to your prayer."[29]

This means that there is a real link between our prayers and the deeds we perform. This tradition informs us that the deeds of the human being are shaped according to his prayer. If the prayer infuses the spirit of monotheism in the heart and mind of the worshipper (*muṣallī*) and orients him accordingly, the deeds that would follow would sparkle with the light of montheism and the human being would undergo spiritual progress. However, if it lays a negative effect, the actions that would follow would assume the color of polytheism and remoteness from Divine proximity. Consequently our good deeds would carry no weight at all. Almighty Allāh informs us about a people who conjecture that they have done good and are on the straight path, but in reality they have nothing but loss:

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[29] Imām 'Alī ('a), *Nahju'l Balāgha*, letter no. 27

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِيْنَ أَعْمَالاً. الَّذِيْنَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ
فِي الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ هُمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُوْنَ صُنْعًا

Say [O Our Apostle Muḥammad] Shall we tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they are working good deeds.[30]

One who always verbally declares that all praises belong to Allāh (*al-Ḥamdu lilLāh*), whether in his *qirā'a* or elsewhere in prayer, but is oblivious of the true meaning of what he utters may, for example, give away a lot of wealth as alms (*ṣadaqa*), but always experience a sense of self-esteem (*'ujb*), thinking that he has done a favor on Allāh. This is while the core of praise restricts it for the real doer of good or possessor of an attribute of perfection, which in the language of Qur'ān is non other than Allāh. The Holy Qur'ān says:

الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All praises belong to Allāh.[31]

Whenever anyone does any good 'the doer and the deed' both are the creation of Allāh, since their existence as well as subsistence entirely depends on His power. And since He is the sole Creator and whatever He creates is beautiful, every beautiful deed is His:

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ

'One who made beautiful all that He created[32]

Furthermore, since He is the sole possessor of all perfect & beautiful attributes, all praises belong to Him:

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[30] Holy Qur'ān, 18:103-104
[31] *Ibid*, 1:2
[32] *Ibid*, 32:7

اللَّهُ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ لَهُ الأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى

Allah, excepting Him, there is no God;
His are the beautiful Names.[33]

Therefore how can one ever think highly of himself for having given something that he really and ontologically does not possess? How can one ever extol himself for a good deed that the Almighty enabled him to perform? One, however, who understands and always pays attention to the fact that all praises solely belong to Allāh and appreciates its true meaning would always thank Allāh for the blessing of enabling him to give his wealth for His sake. To express *takbīr* in prayers and be ignorant of its meaning or inattentive of the same, would not make one God-wary in many of his acts. *Allāhu Akbar* means that Allāh is greater than whatever is described of Him. In simpler words, He transcends the bounds of finitude and is free from every kind of shortcoming or imperfection. He is Infinite and present everywhere:

فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ

"...Whithersoever you turn, there is the face of Allāh..."[34]

One, therefore, who does not inculcate this truth in his mind and heart in prayer would always blemish his soul with the taints of 'sin'. Sin, which is disobedience to the Creator, is a *practical expression of polytheism*, whereas the worshipper declares the Non-composite and Infinite reality of His Creator which is equal to the impossibility of even the assumption of a second.

In simpler terms: The Holy Qurān informs us of a people who worship their vain desires and consider them as their God:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

Have you seen him who has taken his vain desire to be his God?[35]

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[33] *Ibid*, 20:8
[34] *Ibid*, 2:115
[35] *Ibid*, 25:43

Therefore "obeying" one's vain desires is to worship them, which is tantamount to polytheism. In other words whosoever prefers his vain desires to some of the commands of Allāh is practically declaring polytheism.

If the *muṣallī* were to understand the above, and realized the meaning of *takbīr*, and mold the heart accordingly, he would always be deterred from sin. Small wonder it is that the Holy Qur'ān says:

وَ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنْ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

...And keep up prayer;
Surely prayer restrains one from
indecency and the forbidden...[36]

*Finding Unoccupied Time And Unoccupied Heart*

A very important method of attaining *hudūru'l qalb* suggested by some scholars of ethics is to apportion a specific time for prayer, a time in which you have no preoccupations to busy your mind and heart with.

Habituating oneself in praying with a free mind would really help the novice in the path of Allāh to attain concentration and maintain the same throughout his worship. It is only by means of proper discipline and organization that such a practice can be achieved. *It is impossible for the contemplative who has realized the close link between his prayer and his deeds to be slothful and give less importance to prayer.*

[36] *Ibid.* 29:43

# Section 6

## The Effect of Maintaining Attention In Prayer

If his disposition has not been eclipsed by his misdeeds, the desire to attain perfection never ceases, and the wayfarer continues on his journey towards his Beloved. Almighty Allah molded the human being in a manner that he yearns and is able to soar forever and achieve the higher levels of perfection... His aim is the Infinite. Examples of such a drive is manifested in the human being's craving for infinite knowledge, power, and beauty...The beauty here lies in how the Creator designed the human being: although man has nothing of his own, not even existence to own his finite perfection, the Infinitely Perfect continually welcomes him to Himself: "To Allah is the homecoming"

## Section 6:
## The Effect of Maintaining Attention In Prayer

يَا أَيُّهَا الإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

O Man!
You are striving
Unto your Lord
Laboriously,
And you shall encounter Him.[37]

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ قُرْبَانُ الْمُؤْمِنِ

Verily prayer is
A means for the believer to attain God's proximity.[38]

One of the most sublime effects of observing attention in prayer, as indicated in the above narration, is Allāh's nearness and proximity. The abovementioned verse of the Holy Qur'ān also tells us that man is a traveler in this world and that his destination is the neighborhood of his Beloved Creator. Again, in chapter 35, verse no. 18, we read:

وَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ وَ إِلَي اللَّهِ الْمَصِيْرُ

And whosoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own soul's good.
To Allah is the homecoming (destination)[39].

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[37] Holy Qur'ān, 84:6

[38] al-Hindi, *Kanzu'l 'Ummāl*, tr. 18907

[39] *'Māṣir'* in the verse has a meaning worthy of consideration. Its verbal noun (*masdar*) is *'ṣayrūrah'* (the process of becoming). Rāghib, the well-known lexicographer, in his *l-Mufradāt* says: *'Ṣāra* is to transfer from one state to another.' (al-Mufradāt, p. 149). The human being by means of devotional practices undergoes a perpetual process of change of state, which according to the Holy Qur'ān is endless, since the path to Allāh, Whose reality is Absolute & Infinite Perfection is endless. We say this because whatever distance

Almighty Allāh prescribed a set of devotional acts for man to enable him to soar to His Proximity and attain knowledge of His Exalted Presence. It is this sacred aspiration wherein lies the true happiness of the human being. To understand this reality does not require one to search for intellectual proofs. The innate nature (*fiṭra*) of the human being itself is a proof of this reality: the human being innately aspires to attain infinite perfection, which exists in none other than his Creator. If his innate nature has not been eclipsed by his misdeeds, the desire to attain perfection never ceases, and the wayfarer continues on his journey towards his Beloved. Almighty Allāh molded the human being in a manner that he yearns and is able to soar forever and achieve the higher levels of perfection. He naturally does not aspire for limited perfection. His aim is the Infinite. Manifestations of such a drive are the human being's craving for infinite knowledge, power, and beauty. Independent Infinite perfection, however, solely belongs to God, since He alone is the Necessary Existent. His near servants, however can enjoy His proximity and perpetually soar and progress, since the journey is endless. The beauty here lies in how the Creator designed the human being: although man has nothing of his own, not even existence to own his finite perfection, the Infinitely Perfect continually welcomes him to Himself:

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And Allāh *continually* Invites
To the abode of peace
And *continually* Guides whosoever
He wants
To the straight path[40]

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the human being would be enabled to cover, he would never attain Absolute Perfection-something that is perceivable only for the Necessary Being. Even if he were to attain unimaginably exalted heights through devotional practices his perfection would still be limited.

[40] Holy Qur'ān, 10:25

إِلَي اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

To Allah is the homecoming.[41]

The process of getting closer to God should not mislead us to believe that God is at a higher physical plane and we would reach him if we observe attention in our prayers. Rather, the distance is not physical but metaphysical and spiritual.

The human being through a continual process of inculcation of truth in his prayer, undergoes a spiritual transformation: the prayer teaches and orients him. It ignites his heart to repent and wake up. It forces him to seek forgiveness of the sins that he has committed; it teaches him to be an obedient servant of God; it perpetually transforms him and transports him towards true monotheism. Therefore if concentration is always maintained therein, the true aspirant of perfection can purify his inner self and obey all whatever Allah has commanded him. It is the sense of indifference in man that creates doubt in the possibility of attaining the higher levels of human perfection that the gnostics (*awliyā'*) speak about. If one were to painstakingly contemplate and understand even the overt and outer meaning of what he expresses in prayer, he can surely undergo spiritual change.

How can the *muṣallī* always have the audacity to declare the immaculate nature of God, when he manifests in his practical life actions that are incongruous with his declaration? To rely on people's wealth, for example, is an extension (*miṣdāq*) of such incongruity: how can one pin his hopes on a human being like himself who (in reality) neither possesses anything of his own, nor has knowledge of his next moment? How can one show respect to another due to the wealth and affluence of the latter, while he always declares that all praises belong to God, which finally means that every entity is His property? If one were to carefully ponder over what he expresses in prayer and understand the essence of their meaning, his actions would shine with the spirit of

[41] Holy Qur'ān, 35:18

monotheism and transport him to the hometown which his heart naturally aspires.

# Appendix I

## The Meaning Of Prayer

...In Islamic traditions we understand the real meaning of *'takbir'* as 'Allahu Akbar min an yusaf' (God is greater than what is described of Him)...His ownership is real and ontological (*haqiqi* and *takwini*): He has total control over all His creation, and can lay any kind of effect on any one of them. Therefore, every sort of knowledge, wisdom, wealth and treasure is His, and totally under His control... we should engrave in our minds the fact that we are placing the most honored part of our body (our face) on the most insignificant of things (earth).

# Appendix I:
# The Meaning of Prayer

The scope of this short appendix is too limited, and hence we shall only explain some parts of prayer here-below:

*Niyya*
[Intention]

It is not necessary for one to pronounce the ***niyya*** verbally, for the its reality is "the intention of doing an action". The ***muṣallī*** (the one who prays) has it in his mind and knows what prayer he is going to recite. The ***fuqahā*** in their books of jurisprudence mention the necessity of the intention of ***qurb*** (attaining nearness of Allāh). They say that we must pray with the intention of attaining nearness of Allāh.

The worshipper is advised to be extremely watchful lest his intention mixes with any of his worldly interests, for that will destroy the edifice of his prayer. Ethicians or the ***'ulamā-ul-akhlāq*** have underscored with convincing proofs the fundamental importance of ***niyya*** or intention.

Another very important necessity is to maintain one's niyya till the end of his ***Ṣalāt***; for at times, the ***muṣallī*** may begin with a purely Divine intention, but when he senses an onlooker around him, he changes his attitude due to the latter's presence.

*Takbiratul Ihram*

أَللّٰهُ أَكْبَرُ

Allāh is Greater

This is when the ***muṣallī*** pronounces the words ***'Allāhu Akbar'*** translated as 'God is the Greatest' or 'God is greater (than every other being). When uttering these words he must inculcate in himself the fact that no being in the world of creation is greater than Allāh. He should visualize the reality that every element of his

body and soul is totally dependent upon Allāh's Will. Hence he has no reason to think for himself as possessing any degree of greatness whatsoever. Instead he should express his lowliness in front of his Great Lord in a way that he tangibly senses his total dependence to Him.

In Islamic traditions we understand the real meaning of *'takbīr'* as *'Allāhu Akbar min an yūṣaf'* (God is greater than what is described of Him).

*Qiyam*
[Standing Upright with no movements]

The Islamic jurists are of the opinion that whoever is indifferent of this pillar of *Ṣalāt*, his *Ṣalāt* becomes null and void (*bāṭil*). The secret of *qiyām* is very interesting: the *Ahlul Ma'rifa* (the learned scholars) know *qiyām* as referring to al-tawḥīdul afʿālī (unity of actions). This means that every action that any being performs entirely stands by the Power of Allāh.[ This however should not be taken to mean that God does the action for man and man has no role in his action; man has been given a will and can choose the path that he desires). Therefore, as we stand in *qiyām*, we must place this exalted meaning in our hearts too.

*Qira'a*
[Qur'an-Recitation].

The *muṣallī* then recites Ṣūratu'l Ḥamd and another chapter from the Holy Qur'ān. Before reciting it, however, he should, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ān, seek refuge in Allāh from the accursed Saṭan. Then he must recite distinctly (*tartīl*) the *Fātiḥatul Kitāb* and inculcate in his mind the meaning of every sentence that he recites. Following is a simple translation of *Ṣūratul Fātiḥa*:

# *Ṣūratu'l Fātiḥah*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

*Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm .*

1. I begin with Allāh's Name, the All-merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), Whose Grace and Mercy covers every created being, the Ever-Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*), whose specific Mercy is enjoyed by the believers.

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

*Alḥamdu lillāhi Rabbil 'Ālamīn*

2. All praises belong only to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds. [The Name Allāh is a proper noun that refers to the Exalted Being and is believed to manifest all His Perfect qualities and attributes. And the word *'rabb'* which we translated as 'Lord' has a much comprehensive meaning. It means 'the Absolute Owner, Provider, Sustainer and Trainer'. This means God provided, and continues providing existence to -us; He owns every element of our being; He provides us, out of His Mercy any perfection that He wants, and guides us at every step on our way to His nearness.]

اَلرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

*Al Raḥmānir Raḥīm*

3. The All-merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), Whose Grace and Mercy covers every created being, the Ever-Merciful (*al-Raḥīm*), whose specific Mercy is enjoyed by the believers.

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ

*Māliki yawmiddin*

4. Owner of the Day of Judgment (and every existing being). [We must understand the fact that Allāh's ownership is not relative or

superficial- as is man's. His ownership is real and ontological (*ḥaqīqī* and *takvinī*): He has total control over all His creation, and can lay any kind of effect on any one of them. Therefore, every sort of knowledge, wisdom, wealth, treasure is His, and totally under His control. ]

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَ إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ

*Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'īn*

5. You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help.

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ

*Ihdinaṣ ṣirāṭal mustaqīm*

6. [O Allāh] Guide us on the straight path.

صِراطَ الَّذِيْنَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لاَ الضَّآلِّيْن

*Ṣirāṭal ladhīna an'amta 'alayhim ghayril maghḍūbi 'alayhim walaḍ ḍāllīn*

7. The path of those on whom You have blessed; not of those who have earned Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

Having recited Ṣūratu'l Ḥamd the *muṣallī* is allowed to recite any other Ṣūra of the Holy Qur'ān apart from those that contain verses, that if read or heard, oblige him to prostrate (or do *sajda*) according to the Islamic law.

Since many of us recite *Ṣūrat al-Tawḥīd* as our second Ṣūra, I shall give a simple meaning of the same in the following pages.

# *Sūrat al-Tawḥīd*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيْم

*Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm*

1. I begin with Allāh's Name, the All-merciful (***al-Raḥmān***), Whose Mercy covers every dependent being, the Ever-Merciful (***al-Raḥīm***), whose specific Mercy is enjoyed by the believers.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَد

*Qul Huwallāhu Aḥad-*

2. Say (O Muḥammad) He Allāh is One (meaning Non-composite He cannot be divided like the divisible one. He possesses Infinite existence)

أَللَّهُ الصَّمَد

*Allāhuṣ Ṣamad-*

3. Allāh, the Everlasting Refuge.[42]

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَ لَمْ يُوْلَد

*Lam yalid wa lam yūlad*

4. He begets not (i.e. nothing has been separated from his Exalted Nature), nor is he begotten (i.e. he did not separate or come out from another being)

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[42] This is Arthur J. Arberry's translation which is known in some circles to be one of the best available today. Nevertheless, it would not be unbeneficial to understand the word "aṣ-Ṣamad" better. Its means الذي يقصد إليه في الحوائج 'the One Intended to accomplish one's needs.' This meaning is also narrated from Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir ('a) as quoted in the sacred text of al-Kāfi. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in his al-Mizān believes that the other variant meanings given for "al-Ṣamad" in some holy narratives of the Imāms ('a) are the said meaning's inseparable attributes (*lawāzim*)-See Al-Mizān, v.20, p.391. There is another translation from 'Izzudd in al-Ḥāyek which reads: 'Allāh is the Eternally Besought of all.' –vide p.954, An approximate Translation of the meanings of the Honorable Qur'ān in the English Language, Dār al-Fikr, Lebanon.

وَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَد

*Wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan Aḥad*

5. And there is none like Him (because every other being has been created, and is dependent, save Him the Independent).

*Ruku'*
[Bending In Utter Humility]

Then the ***muṣallī*** bends in humbleness to his Lord, and expresses Allāh's Immaculate Nature, as follows:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيْمِ وَ بِحَمْدِهِ

*Subḥāna Rabbiyal 'aẓimi wa biḥamdih*
Free from all imperfections is my Exalted Lord,
And I praise Him.

*Sujud*
[Prostration]

*Sujūd* is known to be the HIGHEST DEGREE of submission (*istikāna*) to God. Therefore, as we recite the *dhikr* of *sujūd*, we should inculcate in our minds the fact that we are placing the most honored part of our body (our face) on the most insignificant of things (earth).

The *dhikr* of *sujūd* is as follows:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الأعْلى وَ بِحَمْدِهِ

*Subḥāna Rabbiyal ā'lā wa biḥamdih*
Free from defects is my Lord, the Most High,
And I praise Him.

# Appendix II

## Heavenly Stars: Memoirs & Anecdotes Of the God-Wary

...'How much time is left for midday?,' because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing prayer at the beginning of its time...

... Once again, he said with disappointment: 'Why do you deal with me in such a way. Take back the food, so that I perform my prayer.'

... I only have hope of God's Grace and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful.

... so that his eyes does not even fall once at a *ghayr mahram* woman. I observed this from him as an established habit...

# Appendix II:
# Memoirs & Anecdotes of the God-wary

## I: Spiritual Ablutions

Allah (swt) says in the Holy Qur'ān:

إِنَّ اللهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ وَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ

Surely Allāh Loves those who turn unto Him constantly and Loves those who continually purify themselves.[43]

The Holy Prophet(ṣ) is reported to have said:

إِن اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَكُوْنَ أَبَداً عَلَى وُضُوْءٍ فَافْعَلْ: فَإِنَّ مَلَكَ الْمَوْتِ إِذَا قَبَضَ رُوْحَ الْعَبْدِ وَ هُوَ عَلَى وُضُوْءٍ كُتِبَ لَهُ شهادةٌ

If you can always be in the state of *wuḍū*, than do so; for verily if the Angel of death were to take the soul of a servant of God while the latter is in the state of *wuḍū*, martyrdom is written for him.[44]

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) is reported to have said:

اَلْوُضُوْءُ عَلَى الْوُضُوْءِ نُوْرٌ عَلَي نُوْرٍ

*Wuḍū* upon *wuḍū* is light upon light.[45]

### I
### IMĀM KHUMAYNĪ REGULARLY RENEWS HIS WUḌŪ'

[In one of her memoirs, Ms. Dabbāgh says:] "...One of these points was the orderliness & discipline of the personal life of that great man [i.e. Imām Khumaynī]: discipline in reading the papers, discipline in [his] meetings, discipline in reading letters, and discipline (even) in renewing his *wuḍū*'. Definitely it was not such

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[43] Holy Qur'ān, 2:222

[44] Muhammad al-Ray Shahri, *Mīzān al-Ḥikma*, New ed., vol. 4, pg. 3563, tr. 21920

[45] Ibid, tr. no. 21924

that you suddenly ask for him, and are told that he has gone to renew his *wuḍū'*. He rather had a specific time for that. I remember one day in the building that was opposite the house of the Imām in Paris, I together with other brothers was busy listening to a audio cassette. Suddenly I remembered that I must leave, for it was the time of the renewal of Imām's *wuḍū'*. I thought that I must inspect the basin so that it is clean and orderly. I did not like the house for which I was responsible, to look disorderly. The brothers said, 'Come on, does it mean that he has a specific time for that?' However, I went and cleaned, and incidentally, the Imām came at that very moment."[46]

Ms. Marziye Hadidechee

*Famously known as Dabbāgh: a member of the team sent to Moscow for conveying the late imam Khumaynī's message to Gorbachev.*

## II
## IMĀM KHMAYNĪ CLOSES THE WATER TAP BETWEEN THE ACTS OF WUḌŪ'

"On several occasions I have seen Imam Khumaynī performing *wuḍū'*, and noticed that he closes the water tap between the acts of *wuḍū'*, and re-opens it (only) when it is necessary, to avoid any extra water to flow from the tap. This is while most of us do not have the smallest degree of attention toward the matter of *isrāf* (wastage). For example, from the time we intend to perform *wuḍū'*, the tap is open until when our ablution is completed. Whenever Imām [Khumaynī] wanted to perform *wuḍū'*, he was very careful in using less water. This vigilance was witnessed in the most minor of his movements. He always performed *ghusl* (the Friday major ablution) before the call of prayers at Friday noon, and his Friday *ghusl* was never left. Whenever the Imam performed *wuḍū'*, he would perform all the parts of it facing the *qibla*. Even if the basin was not in the direction of the *qibla*, at every instance, after taking a handful of water, he closed the tap, and facing the

[46] *Imām Dar Sangar-e Namāz*, pp. 12-13

*qibla*, washed his face or hand. Imām Khumaynī, in accordance with his self-commitment and Islamic belief, tried to practice whatever he preached. For example, if during *wuḍū'* he reminded one of his family members not to use water more than necessary, he too carefully followed the same..."[47]

Dr. Maḥmūd Burūjardī

*Imām Khumayni's son-in-law*

## III
## 'IT IS NOT THE TIME FOR AN INTERVIEW NOW.'

"One day in Paris a person came and said: "The Americans have come to take an interview with Imām Khumaynī, and this program shall be broadcasted live. If such an action transpires than naturally other European countries would follow suit, and this can be effective in revealing the stances and movement of the revolution."

Incidentally it was a Friday. I came to Imām Khumaynī and informed him of the matter. He said: 'Now is the time of doing the recommended acts-the Friday *ghusl*, not the time for an interview." When he had performed the recommended acts of Friday, he said: 'I am ready for the interview."[48]

Ms. Marziyeh Ḥadidechī

[47] *Ibid*, pp. 11-12

[48] *Ibid*, pg. 14

## II: On Prayer

Allāh (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'ān:

حَافِظُوْا عَلى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَ الصَّلوٰةُ الوُسْطَى ۚ وَ قُومُوا لِلّٰهِ قَانِتِيْن

Be you watchful over the prayers,
And the middle prayer;
And stand obedient to God. (2:238)

The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said:

أَفْضَلُ الأَعْمَال عِنْدَ اللهِ الصَّلاةُ فِي أَوَّلِ وَقْتِها

The best of deeds to Allāh is prayer in the beginning of its time

What follows are thought provoking memoirs of people who got the advantage to observe great Muslim scholars at prayer time:

I

### A YOUTH EXTREMELY OBSERVANT OF PRAYER TIME

"Of the important distinguishing characteristics of Imām Khumaynī was that he always performed the prayer at the beginning of its time, and would give importance to the recommended prayers (*Nawāfil*) . This characteristic was present in him since the beginning of his youth age, when he hadn't exceeded twenty years. Some friends used to say: "We thought in the beginning that God forbid, he performs his prayers at the beginning of its time, out of show off. For this very reason, we tried to do something that if this action was out of showiness, we stop the same. For a long time we thought of it, and tried him several times in various ways. For example, exactly at the beginning of the prayer time, we would spread the table cloth (for having our meals); or arrange to set out on a journey. However, he would say, 'You go on with your food, and I shall perform my prayers. I shall

eat whatever remains. Or while leaving for a journey (at the beginning of the prayer time) he would say: 'You go ahead. I shall follow and reach you.' A long time had passed since this matter took place, and not only was his timely prayer not left, he (also) compelled us to perform our prayers at the beginning of its time."

Muḥammad 'Abā'ī

## II
## WHAT IMĀM AL-ṢĀDIQ ('A) ACTUALLY MEANT

"The other issue was prayer at the beginning of its time, that he lay great importance to. He would narrate a tradition from Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq that said: 'If a person takes his prayer lightly, he shall be deprived of our intercession.' Once I said to him: 'Taking prayers lightly may mean that a person sometimes performs his prayers, while sometimes he does not.' He said: 'No. This, rather, is against the religion. Imām al-Ṣādiq meant that when *Ẓuhr* (noon) comes to transpire (for example), and the person does not perform his prayers at the beginning of the prayer time, he has in reality given preference to something else."

Maḥmūd Burūjardī

## III
## PRAYERS IN TIMES OF GREAT DIFFICULTY

[This refers to the time Imām Khumaynī was captured by the forces of the Shāh.]: "Imām [Khumaynī] narrated the following to me: I had said on the way that I haven't performed my prayers. Stop at a place, so that I perform *wuḍū*. They said: 'We do not have the permission to do so.' I said, 'But you are armed, while I do not have any weapon. Besides, you are altogether, while I am alone; I cannot do anything.' They said, 'We don't have the permission to do so.' I understood that there is no use (to go on explaining), and they shall not stop. I said, 'All right, at least stop so that I may do *tayammum*. They listened to this and stopped the

car. However, they did not give me the permission to come out. Whilst in the car, I bent myself and hit my hand on the ground and performed *tayammum*. The prayer I offered was in the state of facing opposite the *qiblah*. This was because we were heading to Tehrān from Qum, and the *qibla* was at the South. It was a prayer recited with a *tayammum*, opposite the *qibla* and whilst the car was moving. This is how I prayed my *Ṣubḥ* (dawn) prayers. Maybe these two units of my prayers pleases God."

Farīdeh Muṣṭafawī

## IV
## INDEED SUCH ARE MOMENTS WHEN THE TRUE BELIEVERS ARE CLEARLY DECIPHERED

"In one of the gatherings where, Hadhrat Āyatullāh Khāmaneī, as the President of the time was also present. Also among those present were Āghā Rafsanjānī (the president of the parliament), the Commanders of the Revolutionary guards, other forces, and I, who was there as the commander of the land forces. The gathering took place in the small room of the Imām. He was seated on a chair and we sat on the ground in front of him in a circle. I do not remember it was who's turn to deliver a report, that suddenly the Imām left the room. Imām's confrontation was extremely shocking to us. The reporter could not finish what he was saying, for he was astounded and astonished as to what should he say and to whom should he address. (Thereafter) the first one to speak was Āghā Rafsanjānī, who said: 'Āghā, are you feeling unwell?' Imām Khumaynī returned quickly and cleanly said, 'No; It is the time for prayer.' I looked at my watch unconsciously. I knew the prayer time of Ṭehrān beforehand, and can (confidently) say that the time of Imām's leave for the purpose of prayer had no difference of even a minute with it...In reality, the Imām's state of worship was such that he could not pay attention to what the reporter said moments before the beginning of prayer time."

The Martyr 'Ali Ṣayyād Shīrazī

## V
## INFRONT OF ALL THE REPORTERS LOVE OF THE BELOVED GIVES HIM NO RESPITE

"The Day when Shāh escaped, we were in Neauphle-le-Chateau in Paris. The French police had closed the main highway of Neauphle-le-Chateau; all the news-reporters of different countries of the world were present. The foreign news-reporters from Africa, Asia, Europe and America, and probably 150 cameras just broadcasted the Imām's speech. Believe it that the news-reporters numbered as such, because they were reporting about the greatest event of the year. The Shāh had gone, and they wanted to know Imām Khumaynī's decision. Khumaynī stood on a chair near the highway, and all the cameras were focused at him. He spoke for a few minutes and said what he wanted to say. I was standing besides the Imam. Suddenly, he faced me and said: 'Aḥmad, has the midday come to transpire?' I said: 'Yes, it is midday now.' Imām Khumaynī, without any fear, bade them off as follows: *'Wassalāmu...'* Look at what moment did he leave his speech to perform his prayer at the beginning of its time. That is, at such a sensitive moment when International Television Broadcasting Stations, which have millions of viewers, such as the C.N.N., the B.B.C. London, all the television channels of London and America, all the news-reporters such as the Associated Press, the United Press, Reuters, and all the reporters of (the different) news-papers, magazines and radio-television stations were present, Imam cut his conversation and went after his prayer."

Sayyid Aḥmad Khumaynī
*Late son of Imām Khumaynī*

## VI
## IMĀM IS INFORMED OF MARTYR RAJĀ'Ī'S DECISION

"That which Imām Khumaynī highly emphasized, and showed great sensitivity towards was prayer at the beginning of its time.

My father would say also, that ever since his adolescence and youth age he (Imam Khumaynī) used to pray at the beginning of prayer time. If you remember, during the beginning of the victory of the revolution, Martyr Rajā'ī, introduced a law that the ministries and governmental organizations should remain closed for half and hour for prayer. This issue was very interesting and lesson-giving. When it was asked from Imām Khumaynī concerning his opinion on this matter, he said: 'If it does not cause harm to the time and work of anybody, do it (as suggested)."

Dr. Maḥmūd Burūjardī
*Son-in-law of Imām Khumaynī*

## VII
## WHAT KIND OF LOVER WAS THIS WHO EVEN IN THAT STATE NEVER FORGOT THE ONLY BELOVED

"The time was ten minutes to eight when they brought Āghā to the C.C.U. I whispered near the Imām's ears: 'Āghā, it is the time for prayer; should Mr. Anṣārī come, so that you (can) perform *wuḍū?*' Imām Khumaynī made a sign with his eye-brows. Dr. Ilyāsī said: 'Āghā is listening to everything, but cannot reply.' That is when I saw the Imām pointing with the fore-finger of his right hand, and we thought that he is performing his prayers."

Muṣṭafā Kaffāshzādeh

## VIII
## 'IT SHOULD NOT HAPPEN THAT THE SUN RISES AND I HAVE TO PRAY QAḌĀ'.'

"One night before his demise, I was near him (Imām Khumaynī) in the hospital from 10.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. in the morning. He woke up several times from his sleep and asked for water. When I brought juice for him, he said: 'Give me natural water.' He did not take fruit juice. He also asked about the time a number of times;

and continually said: 'It should not happen that the sun rises and I have to pray *qaḍā*.'"

Husayn Sulaymanī

## IX
## WHO IS THIS ANGELIC FIGURE WHO IS SO PARTICULAR OF THE TIME OF MEETING HIS ONLY BELOVED?

"The very same day he [Imām Khumaynī] prayed his *Ẓuhr* and *'Aṣr* prayers with *wuḍū'*. From an hour before noon, he asked whoever came to him: 'How much time is left for mid-day?' And his aim (behind this) was that he should not delay in praying at the beginning of its time. From 3.30 afternoon an overwhelming anxiety overcame all (of us). The treatment had reached at a point when, following utmost efforts by the physicians and the Hospital personnel, everyone was in wait for a miracle to transpire. During Maghrib, the doctors, considering their awareness of his sensitivity toward prayers, called him and said: 'Āghā, it is time for prayer.' Imām Khumaynī, who was unconscious from 1.30 afternoon, attended to this voice. All of us witnessed that he prayed his Maghrib prayer in that state of restlessness by moving his hands and eyebrows."

Firishte I'rābī

## X
## REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS BY THE MENTION OF PRAYER

"He (Imām Khumaynī) loved performing his prayer at the beginning of its time. Even in his last day, he prayed the prayer of Maghrib and 'Ishā' by means of signs at 10.00 p.m. He was in the state of unconsciousness when one of the doctors came besides him

and, with the likelihood that probably by means of (mentioning) prayer Āghā could be brought into consciousness, he said: 'Āghā, it is time for prayer.' The moment he said this, Imām regained his consciousness and performed his prayer with signs of his hand. In the morning of that day too, he would always ask us: 'How much time is left for midday?,' because he had no watch with him, and had no strength to look at the watch; after every 15 minutes he would ask us (the time), not because his prayer should not be prayed outside its time, but because of performing prayer at the beginning of its time."

Na'ime Ishrāqī

## XI
## HOW CAN YOU SNATCH THE CUP OF DIVINE LOVE FROM THE INTOXICATED ?

"He [Imām Khumaynī] always prayed at the beginning of the prayer time, and advised his children the same. I remember that in the beginning of the war [Iraq-Iran imposed war], a gathering was held with some presidents and officials, both local and foreign. When there was a call for prayer, Imām Khumaynī without paying attention to the others, stood up and performed his prayer at the beginning of its time, and those present (also) prayed behind him. And in that very period, not only did he recite the 8 units of *Nāfila* prayers of Ẓuhr, but also prayed the 8 units of Nāfila prayers of 'Aṣr. During the days when he was in the hospital, prior to the call of midday prayer, he would ask: 'How much time is left for the call of Zuhr prayer?' And in the middle of the night too he would ask: 'How much time is left for the call of *Ṣubḥ* prayer?' so that he may recite his *Nāfilah* prayers. The time he left this mortal world too, the last moments of his life was together with the word of prayer. Even when he regained consciousness, the first sentence he pronounced was Allāhu Akbar (Allāh is great than what is attributed to Him)."

Āyatullāh Muḥammad Riḍā Tawassulī

## XII
## 'TAKE BACK THE FOOD, SO THAT I PERFORM PRAYER.'

"The day when he [Imām Khumaynī) was transferred to the hospital, he requested that he should be informed about the time for midday and afternoon prayer; and he would pray at the beginning of the prayer time and then take his meal. One day he suddenly noticed that the plate of food was brought inside the room. He asked: 'Do you mean that it is time for prayer?' Those present said: 'Yes, it is prayer time.' Imām, facing them said in an angry tone: 'Why then didn't you wake me up?' They said: 'Due to your particular unfavorable state, we did not want to wake you up.' Once again, he said with disappointment: 'Why do you deal with me in such a way? Take back the food, so that I perform my prayer!'"

Mahdī Imām Jamārānī

## XIII
## GREAT STATIONS ATTAINED BY PRAYING AT THE BEGINNING OF PRAYER TIME

[This narrative is from a contemporary scholar and a student of the contemporary master of philosophy- Āyatullāh Muḥammad Taqī Miṣbāh Yazdī]: "I asked him [my teacher- Āyatullāh Miṣbāh Yazdī]: 'What is the correct and balanced program of worship for a seeker of knowledge in your opinion?' He said with his ever humble attitude: 'I feel ashamed to talk about this, for I myself am greatly deprived of the same. However, I have heard things from great people, of which I shall narrate:...The late 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Āyatullāh Behjat (a contemporary Shi'ah gnostic presently residing in Qum-Irān) quoted Āyatullāh Qāḍī (the teacher of 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī in *'irfān*), as saying: If a person prays the obligatory prayers at the beginning of its time and does

not attain lofty stations, he should curse me! (or, he said: he shoul spit at my face![49]).

The beginning of prayer time is a great secret! Safeguard your prayers حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ *(Ḥāfiẓū ʿalā ṣalawātikum)*[50] is itself a point other than 'Establish the prayer' وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ *(Aqīmuṣ ṣalāt)*![51] The fact that man gives importance and binds himself to perform prayer at the beginning of its time in itself has many effects, even if the prayer is not performed with the presence of heart (and concentration).[52]

Shaykh Muḥsin Gharawiyyān

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[49] This indecision is mentioned in the book. It is not by the translator.
[50] Holy Qur'ān, 2:238
[51] Ibid, 2:43
[52] Muḥsin Gharawiyyān, *Dar Mahzare Buzurgān* [A Persian treatise on the Memoirs of saints contemporary to the author], p.99

## III: The Hereafter

وَ اللَّهِ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلاَّ الْبَرْزَخ

I swear by Allāh, I do not fear for you except in *Barzakh*
(Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a))[53]

If great authorities of gnosis (*'irfān*), who had already purified their inner selves and entirely sacrificed their lives for the sake of human salvation, believed that migration to the next world- the intermediate realm (*barzakh*)- is difficult, what should those like the author, who have drowned themselves in the mundane pleasures of the world, express?

Following are some narratives worthy of reflection:

### I
### I HAVE NO ACTION TO MY CREDIT

[The night before he left for the hospital where he was to pass the last moments of his life, the late Imām Khumaynī was in the company of Fāṭima Ṭabāṭabā'ī-his daughter-in-law among other relatives. The latter narrates the following conversation, which took place after Imām Khumaynī had eaten very little of his dinner:]

" Imām said: 'Now I have one or two advices for you: I shall not return. However, I don't want you to express grief and anxiety on my demise. I am asking God to give you patience. Be careful not to weep and lament. This is what I had to say." I and Khānum (the wife of Imām Khumaynī) were present; I do not recollect exactly; I think Zahrā Khānum Ishrāqī was (also) present. I don't know whether someone else was present or not. It was difficult for us to listen to this issue; all of us had turned sad. Khānum said: 'No, Āghā, God Willing, you will recover...' He [Imām Khumaynī]

[53] Muhammad al-Ray Shahrī, *Mizān al-Ḥikma*, new ed., vol.1, pg. 252, tr. 1681

said: 'No, I will not return. However, let me tell you this: to go [to the next world] is very difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult.' I [Fāṭimah Ṭabāṭabā'ī] said: 'Āghā, If you say all this, then we shall greatly lose our hopes. This is because, as far as I know, although I am young, those who have been with you narrate that not only have you performed all the obligatory deeds, and abstained from the forbidden ones, you have also observed the recommended acts and even abstained from most of the unpleasant deeds (*makrūhāt*). If it is really difficult for you also, then what should we say? We get greatly despondent. He said: 'No, you must not despair from God's Mercy[54]; this itself is the greatest sin...[55] However, bear this in mind that to go [to the next world] is very difficult; I do not have any [good] deed, so that I should want to be happy thereby.' I said: 'But Āghā, these words that you utter are very difficult for us to bear, for if it is as such, we are extremely frightened, worried and upset.' He said: 'It is really as such. If Ḥaḍrat Sajjād ['a] wept and said: "O Lord it is likely that my good deeds are bad"[56], do I possess a deed to get happy and confident thereby? I only have hope of God's Grace[57] and have no [action] at my credit to be hopeful...; and to go [to the next world] is very

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[54] The Holy Qur'ān [39:54] says: Say: O My servants who have been extravagant against yourselves, do not despair of Allāh's Mercy; surely Allāh forgives sins altogether. Surely, He is the All-forgiving, the All-compassionate. The Holy Qur'ān [15:56] also says: He said, 'And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord, excepting those that are astray?'

[55] Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have once told a person, whom fear had made to despair, due to the ampleness of his sins: 'O you! Your despondency of Allāh's Mercy is worse than your sins.' [*Jāmi' al- Sa'ādāt*, Mawlā Muḥammad Mahdi al-Narāqī, vol. 1, pg. 247]

[56] This also refers to what Imam al-Ḥusayn ('a) says in his famous supplication of 'Arafah. He says: 'O God, one whose good deeds are bad, how can his bad deeds not be bad?' [*Mafatiḥ al-Jinān*, Du'ā al-'Arafah, Imām al-Ḥusayn (A), compiler- Marḥūm Shaykh Abbās Qummī].

[57] The Holy Prophet (ṣ) is reported to have said: ' Know that no one of you will be saved by his action, including me; except if Allāh's Mercy and Grace were to cover me.' (Mīzān al-Ḥikmah, Muḥammad al-Ray Shahrī, new ed., vol.3, pg. 2131)

difficult; to go [to the next world] is very difficult. The doctors then came, and Imām [Khumaynī] said: 'It is time to leave.'[58]

Fāṭima Ṭabāṭabā'ī
*The daughter-in-law of Imām Khumaynī*

الصِّرَاطُ أَدَقُّ مِنَ الشَّعْرَةِ وَأَحَدُّ مِنَ السَّيْفِ

'The path (*ṣirāṭ*) is finer than the hair and sharper than the sword.'
[Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a)][59]

## II
## THE TASK IS VERY DIFFICULT

[Not very long before his demise, the late son of Imām Khumaynī, Ḥujjatu 'l Islām Ḥāj Sayyid Aḥmad Khumaynī, dreamt his father. He narrates:] "I saw Imām Khumaynī in my dream. He said to me: 'Tell your friends that I [have already] crossed the straight path (*ṣirāṭ*). However, the task is very difficult.'"[60]

The Late Ḥujjatu'l Islām Sayyid Aḥmad Khumaynī
*The late son of Imām Khumaynī*

[58] *Fasl-e Ṣabr*-Memoirs of the days of Imām's illness and demise by the team of physicians and those affiliated to Imām Khumaynī, pp. 83-84.
[59] *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, Muḥammad al-Rayṣhahrī, new ed., vol. 2, pg. 1610, tr. 10481
[60] *Dalīl-e Āftāb*, Memoirs of the Reminder of Imām Khumaynī, pg.169.

## IV: Extreme Chastity

Allāh (swt) says in the Holy Qur'ān:

قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَ يَحْفَظُوْا فُرُوْجَهُمْ
ذٰلِكَ أَزْكٰى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللهَ خَبِيْرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ.

Say to the believers,
That they cast down their eyes
And guard their private parts;
That is purer for them.
Allāh is aware of the things they work[61].

### THE LATE ĀYATULLĀH MAR'ASHI'S EXTREME CHASTITY

[This narration is from a student of the late Āyatullāh Shahāb al-Dīn Mar'ashī, who at present ranks among the esteemed tutors of the Islamic Seminary in Qum.]. "During his (Late Āyatullāh Mar'ashī's) old age, I had observed several times that on entering the holy shrine of Haḍrat Ma'ṣūma ('a) for teaching or praying, and noticing the apparition of a woman from far, he would raise his cloak above his face, so that his eyes do not even fall once at a *ghayr maḥram* woman. I observed this from him as an established habit"[62].

Hujjatu'l Islām al-Sayyid 'Ādil al-'Alawī
*A contemporary scholar in Qum*

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[61] Holy Qur'ān, Ṣūrat an-Nūr (24), verse 30
[62] Sayyid 'Ādil 'Alawī, *Qabasāt min Ḥayāti Sayyidinal Ustādh*, p. 95

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